



257 Lawrence Street, Hartford CT 06106 | P (860) 721-7876 | F (860) 257-1148 | www.cceh.org

**Testimony for Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
February 3, 2015 Hearing on the Affordable Housing Appeals Process (8-30g)
By Lisa Tepper Bates, Executive Director
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness**

Senator Winfield, Representative Butler, and Members of the Housing Committee:

My name is Lisa Tepper Bates, and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH), a statewide advocacy organization founded in 1982 by shelter staff and volunteers in response to increasing homelessness in our state. CCEH works with nonprofit providers of shelter and services to end each case of homelessness in our state. A critically important resource in efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut is affordable housing.

On behalf of the providers who serve the homeless, and on behalf of the 14,000 people who will experience homelessness in Connecticut each year, I respectfully request that you record our opposition to the five Senate Bills and 27 House Bills that propose to amend or repeal Connecticut General Statute Section 8-30g, regarding the Affordable Housing Appeals Process.

Expanding the stock of affordable housing in Connecticut is vital to combatting housing insecurity and homelessness in our state. Connecticut is the sixth most expensive state in the United States in terms of housing costs. Nearly half of our state residents spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs, alone. According to the United Way of Connecticut, some 35% of our state residents live on the very knife-edge of poverty, barely paying their bills month to month. For the great majority of these households, housing is the single largest expense they must meet if they are to avoid homelessness. Many do not avoid the difficult and traumatic experience of homelessness: a significant share of new cases of homelessness in Connecticut every year is caused by the inability to pay rent.

At present, there is an inadequate supply of deeply affordable housing in Connecticut. The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that Connecticut has a shortage of at least 90,000 housing units for extremely low-income renters. These low-income renters often perform important, if poorly paid, jobs in our economy: they pour the coffee, flip the burgers, clean the hotel rooms, and staff the dry cleaners. These are Connecticut residents filling jobs critical to the economy of every community, of every town and city, across our state. These are residents of our state who have a right to housing within financial reach for themselves and their children. But to afford a typical two-bedroom apartment in Connecticut, a household must earn at least \$23 per hour, or about \$48,000 a year, just to scrape by and make rent. For too many people in Connecticut, this wage rate is unattainable, and the housing cost burden is far too high.

Shelters in Connecticut are full, and yet there are too many shelters. Transient housing cannot and should not substitute for a permanent home. Prisons and hospital emergency departments should not serve as primary sources of a bed, a meal, and medical

care. Providers of homeless services work every day to assist people experiencing homelessness in finding affordable housing options that will allow them to leave emergency shelters and transitional housing. Available options are simply not enough. To end homelessness, we need to create more affordable housing.

To meet the need for housing affordable to a significant portion of our families and our workforce, to prevent and end homelessness in our state, we must expand the stock of deeply affordable housing. Section 8-30g is one of the tools we need to do this.

The Affordable Housing Appeals Process (8-30g) has created thousands of units of affordable housing in Connecticut, most without the need for additional government subsidies. 8-30g is a market-driven approach that creates affordable homes in communities that have limited affordable housing options.

Affordable housing is essential to helping families and individuals maintain housing they can afford, and avoid the prospect of homelessness. Affordable housing is a critical resource to help many who are seeking to exit homelessness to regain the stability and security. A base of housing security is critically important to our neighbors seeking to access jobs, education, transportation, health care and community connections to stabilize the lives of all members of their families.

On behalf of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, our members, partners and the people we serve, I urge you to vote against all 32 of the proposed bills that will have adverse impact on Section 8-30g, and support our efforts to find an affordable home for every resident of our state. Appropriate housing for everyone should not be a luxury in one of the wealthiest states in the most powerful country on Earth.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important issue.

Respectfully,

Lisa Tepper Bates
Executive Director, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness
257 Lawrence Street
Hartford, CT